

Capturing the History of California Polytechnic State University's
College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences

A Senior Project
Presented to

The Faculty of the Agricultural Education and Communication Department
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Science

By
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Introduction

The objective of this senior project was to capture the history of California Polytechnic State University's (Cal Poly) College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES). The importance of this topic lies in both the legacy and future of CAFES. Many individuals at Cal Poly are not familiar with the agriculture program's history. The makeup of this population ranges from current agriculture students to administration. In order to continue the CAFES legacy, history must be captured, recorded and documented. It is critical this history is preserved to educate and share with future generations, current students and faculty.

Literature Review

Carrie Isaacson graduated in 2012 from the agricultural science major. She conducted the first series of these historical CAFES interviews. Below, Isaacson identifies the importance of preserving history.

The College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) has a rich history at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. CAFES' students have also been recognized for their leadership on campus and pride in their industry since the unit began. CAFES has been growing upon this long and rich history since Cal Poly opened in 1901.

During the 1960s, the agricultural division was the face of Cal Poly. The division housed the majority of students at Cal Poly, provided the most leadership for the campus, was the main topic of news for the school and allowed for the school's largest event, Poly Royal. The agriculture division helped Cal Poly to make a name for itself and produced many leaders that helped to shape the modern agriculture industry. Leafing through randomly selected editions of newspapers from this era, one can find at least five stories highlighting the agricultural division per issue and at least one of those stories would be on the front page. This was more than any other college was featured.

The majors offered by the agriculture division throughout the 1960s reflected the evolving state of the agriculture industry at the time. The agriculture division also offered more majors than any other divisions at Cal Poly. The variety of majors offered shows Cal Poly's dedication to producing agricultural leaders for both the industry and the campus. Today, CAFES continues to offer majors that prepare students to succeed in the modern agriculture industry.

Methods

The first step in preserving portions of the history of CAFES was by identifying interviewees to provide valuable history, insight and information. The main goal was to select retired faculty or within months of retirement, that had been at Cal Poly for an extended length of time. Some of these selected faculty members were students at Cal Poly, who returned to teach and take on leadership roles within CAFES. The next step was to provide a list of open-ended questions.

The purpose of using open-ended questions was to encourage more elaborate responses, which would in turn provide explanations, examples or additional information (Payne, 1965).

The equipment used to conduct these interviews included a Canon Mark 5D III camera with video capabilities, a Sirui tripod to mount the camera, and a Tascam voice recorder with boom mic. The purpose of using these specific pieces of equipment is to guarantee the end product would have both high-quality audio and visual. It is important the video and sound is of the highest quality possible. This will guarantee the end product will be enjoyable as well as informative by means of immersing viewers in methodical environments, which intensify their aesthetic sense perceptions (Seelig, 2010). If both high visual and audio quality is achieved, the video will remain significant and withstand the spans of time. An example of a video clip that has remained impactful through the years, partially due to its audio and visual quality is Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Due to the speech having both audio and visual components it has reinforced the emotions of the speech and therefore will continue to be one of the most identifiable speeches in society.

Results

The interviews conducted included Dr. Mark Zohns, Dr. Robert Spiller, Dr. Bill Kellogg, and Dr. Joe Sabol. Each of the interviewees provided treasured information with regards to CAFES, how the college has evolved throughout the years, and their hopes for the future. The passion that each of these retired faculty members possess for CAFES, Cal Poly, and agriculture was evident and successfully recorded with video and audio files. Each interview conducted was approximately 30-45 minutes in length. The videos will be saved electronically and archived through Cal Poly's Brock Center for Agricultural Communication as well as being shared with the Robert E. Kennedy Library archives.

Conclusion

The author met all objectives of this project successfully. Four retirees were interviewed and their audio and video storytelling archived. It is strongly recommended this project continue in order to properly preserve history and information regarding CAFES. It will be beneficial to use the interviews to educate incoming students, potential donors, and even administration at Cal Poly. These interviews may also serve as a reference and reminder about CAFES programs and their importance on campus and within the agricultural industry. It is critical the Cal Poly population begins to understand the importance of agriculture programs on campus. By these interviews being accessible through the Brock Center for Agricultural Communication, students can be educated and CAFES presence on the Cal Poly campus will be enhanced.

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